

Rants and Raves: Nick LaTour left rich legacy

10:00 PM, Mar. 3, 2011

RAVE: For the many contributions of Nick LaTour, the actor, singer and humanitarian who died this week at 84. His real name, as many Montgomerians recall, was E.D. Nixon Jr. He was the son of that often underappreciated civil rights leader whose role in the Montgomery bus boycott and other battles for equality deserves more credit than it usually has gotten. LaTour had a home in California and died there, but he spent a lot of time in Montgomery. He had a close relationship with the elementary school named for his father. A memorial service will be held here next month.

RANT: For the reduction in hours and staffing at the Autauga-Prattville Public Library necessitated by a significant cut in the city of Prattville's appropriation to the library. That funding fell from \$265,000 to \$200,000. The library, based in Prattville and with branches in Autaugaville, Billingsley and Marbury, has struggled to maintain hours and services even before this funding cut. The latest cutbacks are blow not only to the library, but also to those who use its services, in particular schoolchildren.

RAVE: For the appointment of state Conservation Commissioner Gunter Guy Jr. to a task force working on recovery of the Gulf Coast after the BP oil spill. President Obama named Guy at Gov. Robert Bentley's recommendation to be Alabama's representative on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. The task force will coordinate efforts to implement restoration programs along the Gulf Coast and will work with federal agencies to enhance economic benefits from ecosystem restoration. It's encouraging to know there will be a strong Alabama voice on this task force.

RANT: For the scarcely veiled racism in the comments of Hugh McInnish, a leader in Republican politics in north Alabama who inserted himself into an inquiry from the Justice Department into racial disparities in Huntsville's school system. McInnish used data from a right-wing organization identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as employing what it called "academic racism" -- bigotry dressed up in fancy language. McInnish has no connection to the school

system, and officials said they did not think the Justice Department would consider his letter.

RAVE: For an effort by the Public Service Commission to negotiate with Alabama Power Co. to design incentives for small businesses to expand and add employees. The idea is to find ways the state's largest electric utility could offer discounts to small and medium-size businesses that hire new workers or expand their operations into vacant commercial property. This could help provide some additional economic stimulus and is certainly consistent with the Bentley administration's stated goal of focusing on job creation.

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